

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan

For Further Information Contact:

U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan

Public Affairs Office

PSC 482 Box 1600

FPO AP 96362-1600

DSN: 646-7024

COMMERCIAL: 098-971-7024

CELL: 090-6861-4199

EMAIL: nhokipao@med.navy.mil



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Flu Vaccine Season Begins

USNH Okinawa Public Affairs

CAMP FOSTER—According to public health officials at U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa (USNHO), the majority of this year's supply of vaccine for the 2014 – 2015 flu season has arrived in Okinawa and officials have released the distribution schedule for this year's island-wide immunization campaign.

Influenza vaccinations for operational forces, healthcare personnel, and first responders are already in progress. As usual, medical personnel will distribute the flu vaccine in accordance with the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery directives for immunizing personnel using the following priority categories:

1. Operational military and civilian personnel deployed in support of a combatant command operational requirement (e.g. Southwest Asia, Afghanistan, Korea, etc.) or ordered to deploy to these locations or assigned to a ship regardless of location or deployment status.
2. Health care workers who provide direct or indirect patient care.
3. All other military personnel.
4. All other mission essential or mission critical DoD civilian and contract employees.
5. All other beneficiaries, including DoD civilians, retirees, contractors, family members and any other personnel eligible for care at military health care facilities.

This year, the vaccine will be distributed at several "Points of Distribution" or PODs at military installations throughout the island. The PODs will be staffed by medical personnel from USNHO and elements of the III Marine Expeditionary Force.

III Marine Expeditionary Force

Flu vaccine PODs for active duty military and mission critical civilians will operate Oct. 1 -3 from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the following locations:

- Camp Schwab Theater
- Camp Hansen Theater
- Camp Courtney Theater
- Camp Kinser Theater
- MCAS Futenma Team Delivery

Marine Corps Base Butler/Marine Corps Installations Pacific

- USNH Okinawa Preventive Medicine Department will be conducting vaccinations for active duty military and mission critical civilians Tuesday, Oct. 28 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Camp Foster Community Center. MCIPAC Point of Contact 645-9843.

Commander Fleet Activities Okinawa

- USNH Okinawa Preventive Medicine Department will be conducting vaccinations for active duty military and mission critical civilians Wednesday, Oct. 8 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. CFAO Point of Contact at 630-4100.

U.S. Army Garrison Torii Station

- USNH Okinawa Army Liaison will coordinate vaccinations for active duty military and mission critical civilians Tuesday, Oct. 28 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Camp Foster Community Center. Please contact U.S. Army Garrison Torii Station, at 646-7202 for further information.

Other Beneficiaries

Walk-in flu vaccine clinics will be available to civilian employees, retirees, family members, and other beneficiaries at the following times and locations:

- USNHO Immunizations Clinic
 - Thursday, Oct. 9 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 - Thursday, Oct. 16 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 - Thursday, Oct. 23 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 - Thursday, Oct. 30 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
- Camp Foster Education Center
 - Saturday, Oct. 25 from 7:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
 - Saturday, Nov. 1 from 7:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- Torii Station Education Center
 - Friday, Nov. 7 from 7:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Vaccine will be available for anyone 6 months or older eligible for care at military health care facilities in Okinawa. Both injectable vaccine and nasal mist will be on hand. Flu immunizations are free for pay patients.

No appointment is required at the PODs or walk-in clinics. All participants should bring their ID card, and children under 18 must be accompanied by their parent or guardian. Medical personnel will make entries on personal immunization records such as form PHS-731 (International Certificate of Vaccinations) upon request.

The flu vaccine will be also available to beneficiaries at USNHO Medical Home Ports, and can be obtained during routine clinic visits.

According to public health officials at USNH Okinawa, the annual flu season can peak anywhere from late December through March. Influenza can be a serious disease, and people of any age can get it. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that in an average year the flu causes 36,000 deaths (mostly among those aged 65 years or older) and more than 200,000 hospitalizations in the United States.

According to Ens. from the USNHO Preventive Medicine Department, the best way people can protect themselves and their families from the flu virus is to get immunized at the earliest possible opportunity. There are also a number of precautionary measures people can take to reduce the risk of getting or spreading the flu. “The main way that influenza viruses are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes,” said Ens.

According to Ens., frequent hand washing is considered to be one of the most effective means of controlling the spread of influenza. Flu germs can live for hours on such household objects as telephones, countertops, and computer keyboards and can easily be picked up by the next person using the object. Hand sanitizers can be used if hand washing facilities aren’t immediately available.

Other effective precautions people can take for controlling the spread of viral illnesses such as influenza include:

- **Avoid Close Contact** – Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, stay home and keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too. If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are ill. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Don’t Cover Your Sneezes and Coughs with Your Hands** – Germs and viruses cling to your bare hands, muffling coughs and sneezes with your hands results in passing along your germs to others. When you feel a sneeze or cough coming, use a tissue, and then throw it away immediately. If a tissue isn’t readily available, cough or sneeze into a sleeve.
- **Drink Plenty of Fluids** – Water flushes your system, washing out the poisons and toxins as it rehydrates you. A typical healthy adult requires eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids each day. How can you tell if you’re getting enough liquid? If the color of your urine runs close to clear, you’re getting enough. If it’s deep yellow, you need more fluids.

- **Get Fresh Air** – A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses. Also, during cold weather more people stay indoors, which means more germs are circulating in crowded, dry rooms.
- **Exercise Regularly** – Aerobic exercise speeds up the heart to pump larger quantities of blood, makes you breathe faster to help transfer oxygen from your lungs to your blood, and makes you sweat once your body heats up. These exercises help increase the body's natural virus killing cells.
- **Eat Right** – A healthy diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables, especially dark green vegetables are high in vitamins and phytochemicals that will help boost the immune system.

For more information regarding the 2014 – 2015 flu immunization campaign in Okinawa, contact the USNHO Preventive Medicine Department at 643-7615

To learn more influenza prevention and treatment, visit the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.

U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa is the largest overseas military treatment facility in the Navy, serving a beneficiary population of 55,000 active duty personnel, family members, civilian employees, contract personnel, and retirees. The facility also provides referral services for over 189,000 beneficiaries throughout the western Pacific.

For more news and information about U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, visit www.navy.mil/sites/nhoki or the hospital's official Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usnho.

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